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Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj
(Śāstrī Nārāyaṇasvarūpadāsa)

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SIDDHĀNTAPATRAM

HOLINESS PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ
(Śāstrī Nārāyaṇasvarūpadāsa)

The following is an English translation of a philosophical letter authored by Pramukh Swami Maharaj (Pramukha Svāmī Mahārāja). The letter encompasses the foundational principles revealed by Parabrahman Puruṣottama Swaminarayan (Svāmināràyaṇa):

PHILOSOPHICAL PRINCIPLES

The five entities—*jīva*, *īśvara*, *māyā*, Brahman and Parabrahman—are eternal, existent and forever ontologically distinct.

PARABRAHMAN

Parabrahman Puruṣottamanārāyaṇa,[1] who is the sovereign of Akṣara, is eternal, supreme, always divine, ever with a form, faultless, above *māyā*, one, and unparalleled, and a *cetana* (sentient) entity.

Within his divine Akṣaradhāman, he is seated on a divine throne in his eternally divine, lustrous, and teenage human form complete with two arms and all other features. He (Parabrahman) is worshipped with *dāsabhāva* (wilful servitude)[2] by the *mūrtimān* (personal) form of

1. 'Parabrahman,' 'Puruṣottama,' 'Nārāyaṇa,' 'Bhagavān,' 'Paramātman' and any lexical combination of these terms are understood to be synonymous and refer to God.
2. 'Dāsabhāva' refers to *the sentiment of wilful and unpretentious service that originates*

Akṣarabrahman and infinite *muktas* (released *jīvātmans* and *īśvarātmans*). These *muktas* have attained a *brāhmitanu*[3] and have attained likeness with Akṣarabrahman.[4] Parabrahman is eternally and innately replete with infinite liberating virtues and devoid of the qualities of *māyā*. He is without deficiency, forever possesses all powers, is all-knowing, and the all-doer. He is the material and efficient cause of all creation. He, while residing in his divine Akṣaradhāman in his *vyatireka* (particular) form, pervades and is the support of infinite *brahmāṇḍas* (universes) in his *anvaya* (all-pervasive) form as their *antaryāmin.*[5] He is always infinitely more powerful than *jīvas, īśvaras, māyā, akṣara muktas,* and Akṣarabrahman and is their independent controller, inspirer, and *śarīrin* (embodier). By his own wish, he is the giver of the fruits of the actions of all the *jīvas* and *īśvaras* and is the inspirer of their ability to will, to know, and to do.

Parabrahman Puruṣottamanārāyaṇa, who is imperceptible by *māyic* (worldly) *indriyas* (senses) and *antaḥkaraṇa* (inner faculties), while remaining in Akṣaradhāman, by his own divine wish and out of compassion, for the ultimate liberation of infinite *jīvas* and *īśvaras,* and to fulfil the wishes of his devotees, manifests with all his divine virtues, powers, etc., in perceptible human form in each *brahmāṇḍa* and becomes visible to all.

That manifest form of Parabrahman Paramātman is Sahajanand Swami Maharaj —Shri Swaminarayan Bhagwan (Sahajānanda Svāmī Mahārāja—Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa Bhagavān). Only he is the absolute focus of worship for us all. He always remains entirely manifest in his *anvaya* form through the Akṣarabrahman guru to forever continue the *upāsanā* (worshipful service) of his manifest form even after his disappearance (leaving of his human body).

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from, among other things, love, respect, adoration, humility, and gratitude.

3. 'Brāhmītanu' refers to *a body that is made of Akṣarabrahman*.
4. Akṣarabrahman has countless virtues. Attaining likeness or similarity to Akṣarabrahman refers to the *jīvātmans* or *īśvarātmans* attaining those qualities by which they can attain liberation and offer the highest *upāsanā* (worshipful service) to Parabrahman.
5. 'Antaryāmin' refers to *one who controls while pervading within*.

AKṢARABRAHMAN

Akṣarabrahman is distinct from Parabrahman, and like Parabrahman he is eternal, one, beyond the three *guṇas* (qualities), a *cetana* (sentient) entity, and forever divine. Replete with infinite liberating virtues and devoid of all *māyic* qualities, he is eternally without faults. This Akṣarabrahman's form, qualities, powers, etc. are dependent upon only Parabrahman. By Parabrahman's eternal wish, he is the cause, support, pervader, controller, and *śarīrin* of all creation, which is *jaḍacidātmaka.*[6]

Although Akṣarabrahman is metaphysically one entity, he serves in different ways through four forms.

In his *cidākāśa* form, Akṣarabrahman pervades within and outside infinite *brahmāṇḍas* and upholds them.

As an abode (Akṣaradhāman), Akṣarabrahman is the divine abode of 1) Parabrahman; 2) the *mūrtimān* form of Akṣarabrahman, who is in his (Parabrahman's) service; and 3) infinite *akṣara muktas* (released *jīvātmans* and *īśvarātmans*). There is only one such Akṣaradhāman. It is eternal and forever beyond the three *guṇas*. Only *muktas,* who have attained qualitative similarity[7] to Akṣarabrahman, are able to enter it.

In that same Akṣaradhāman, Akṣarabrahman's form as the personal attendant has, like Parabrahman, a divine human form that is complete with two arms and all other features. As the ideal for *akṣara muktas*, he forever remains engrossed in Parabrahman's service.

That very Akṣarabrahman manifests in human form, in each *brahmāṇḍa* along with Parabrahman, as the guru, who is the complete and uninterrupted vessel of Parabrahman. Akṣara can make bound *jīvas* and *īśvaras* of the world *brahmarūpa*,[8] have them attain *uttama nirvikalpa niścaya* (the greatest unwavering conviction) of Parabrahman, attain ultimate

6. Creation, made of *jada* (inanimate) *māyā*, also contains *cetana* beings, therefore it is called *jaḍacidātmaka.*
7. See footnote 4.
8. 'Brahmarūpa' refers to a state in which one possesses qualities similar to those of Akṣarabrahman.

liberation, and forever experience the manifest presence of Paramātman through his (Akṣara's) divine association. He protects the traditions of the *saṃpradāya* and causes all to experience supreme bliss. Gunatitanand Swami (Guṇātītānanda Svāmī), Bhagatji Maharaj (Bhagatajī Mahārāja), Shastriji Maharaj (Śāstrījī Mahārāja), and Yogiji Maharaj (Yogījī Mahārāja) have appeared in the succession of *guṇātīta* Akṣarabrahman gurus.[9] This succession will continue uninterruptedly. At any given time, the path of ultimate liberation remains open through only one guru.

MĀYĀ

Māyā is composed of the three *guṇas*, eternally changing, *jaḍa*, a material cause of the creation of infinite *brahmāṇḍas*, and Paramātman's diverse mysterious power.[10] As the cause of ego and attachment of *jīvas* and of *īśvaras*, this very *māyā* has been the cause of these *jīvas*' and *īśvaras*' births and deaths since eternity. Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman are forever and entirely untainted by, beyond, and the *śarīrin* of this *māyā*.

ĪŚVARA

An *īśvara* is an eternal *cetana* (sentient) entity distinct from Parabrahman, Akṣarabrahman, and the *jīvas*. Despite being extremely powerless when compared to Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman, these *īśvaras* bear greater power and knowledge than the *jīvas*. Through his wish, Paramātman inspires them to perform the tasks of creation, etc. of the *brahmāṇḍas*. Like the *jīvas*, these *īśvaras* are countless in number, infinitesimal (extremely small), indivisible, and possess other such qualities. They are *jñānasvarūpa*,[11] *jñātā* (those who know), and eternally bound

9. This succession of Akṣarabrahman gurus continued through Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the author of this letter, and continues today through Mahant Swami Maharaj (Mahanta Svāmī Mahārāja).
10. *Māyā* is an instrument, just as a sword may be considered to be the instrument of a soldier. It is thus described here as one of Paramātman's powers.
11. 'Jñānasvarūpa' refers to *being of the form of jñāna (knowledge).*

by *māyā*. They perform righteous and unrighteous *karmas* (actions) and experience the fruits of those actions.

JĪVA

The *jīva* is an eternal, *cetana* (sentient) entity ontologically distinct from Parabrahman, Akṣarabrahman, and the *īśvaras*. These *jīvas* are countless, infinitesimal (extremely small), indivisible, and possess other such qualities. They are *jñānasvarūpa*, *jñātā* (those who know), and eternally bound by *māyā*. They perform righteous and unrighteous *karmas* (actions) and experience the fruits of those actions.

SPIRITUAL ENDEAVOR AND ITS BENEFITS

To attain ultimate liberation, *mumukṣus* (spiritual aspirants) should have firm love for Parabrahman Puruṣottama Bhagavān Swaminarayan and the present Akṣarabrahman guru, through whom Parabrahman is fully and continuously manifest, by having *nirdoṣa buddhi*[12] in them, a feeling of the highest divinity in them, and upon meeting them, conviction in having met the present form of Parabrahman. They should greatly please them by firmly associating with them through *mana* (thought), *karma* (word), and *vacana* (deed).

Aspirant *jīvas* and *īśvaras* who endeavour in this way, through Parabrahman's grace, having attained *ekāntika dharma* and having become *brahmarūpa*, that is, having attained similarity[13] to Akṣarabrahman, acquire the highest devotion to Parabrahman. All their miseries and faults are forever destroyed, and they experience the supreme bliss of Paramātman while alive. By Paramātman's wish, such a *brahmarūpa* devotee, upon leaving the body, attains Paramātman's Akṣaradhāman through the *arcimārga*.[14] There, having attained a *brāhmic*-body, the devotee forever

12. 'Nirdoṣa buddhi' refers to *realizing the present form of Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahman as faultless*.
13. See footnote 4.
14. 'Arcimārga' refers to *the path that leads one to Parabrahman's divine abode.*

enjoys divine bliss while offering, with *dāsabhāva,*[15] service in the form of performing the *darśana*[16] of Parabrahman, the Lord of Akṣaradhāman.

THE MEANING OF AKṢARA-PURUṢOTTAMA UPĀSANĀ

The Akṣara-Puruṣottama *upāsanā* is not the *upāsanā* of two entities—Akṣara and Puruṣottama; but it refers to offering *upāsanā* to Puruṣottama upon having become *akṣararūpa*—in other words, to offer *upāsanā* to Parabrahman upon having become *brahmarūpa*. When Parabrahman, who travels (manifests) in human form, returns to his abode, he shrouds the powers of the Brahmasvarūpa guru and himself travels (remains manifest on earth) through him. Therefore, an aspirant who associates with the manifest guru is, in fact, offering *upāsanā* only to one Paramātmā.

The meaning of the Swaminarayan *mahāmantra* is incorporated in this meaning of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama *upāsanā*: That is, to become *svāmirūpa,* or *akṣararūpa,*[17] and offer devotion and *upāsanā* with *dāsabhāva*[18] to Nārāyaṇa, or Parabrahman Puruṣottama Nārāyaṇa.

CONCLUSION

In this way, these philosophical principles are Vedic, eternal, revealed by Shriji Maharaj (Śrījī Mahārāja or Swaminarayan) and propagated by the lineage of *guṇātīta* gurus.[19]

Jay Swaminarayan from Shastri Narayanswarupdas
Guru Pūrṇimā, Saṃvata 2064 (18 July 2008), Bocāsaṇa

15. See footnote 2.
16. 'Darśana' refers to *the act of seeing with great love, reverence, and devotion.*
17. 'Svāmirūpa' and 'akṣararūpa' are synonyms of 'brahmarūpa.'
18. See footnote 2.
19. 'Guṇātīta guru' refers to the form of Akṣarabrahman through whom one can experience the manifest presence of Paramātman.